

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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COMUSMACHTAI BANGKOK

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 15812

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, ELAB, TH

SUBJECT: THAI SECURITY GUARDS

REF: BANGKOK 14023

SUMMARY: THE STRIKING THAI SECURITY GUARDS (TSG) HAVE REJOINED THE BATTLE AGAINST SUPREME COMMAND BY PRESENTING ANOTHER LIST OF DEMANDS TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE AND THREATENING "DECISIVE ACTION" IF THEY ARE NOT MET. SUPREME COMMAND, THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, AND THE LABOR DEPARTMENT WILL CONTINUE TO BE RELUCTANT TO TAKE A HARD POSITION WITH THE GUARDS, PREFERRING INSTEAD TO HAVE US BAIL THEM OUT. END SUMMARY.

1. ON JULY 29, THE STRIKING TSG ANNOUNCED ONCE AGAIN THAT THEY WOULD TAKE "DECISIVE ACTION" IF SUPREME COMMAND DID NOT RESPOND TO THEIR DEMANDS. SUBSEQUENTLY, ABOUT 1,500 GUARDS SUCCEEDED IN STOPPING TRAFFIC FOR A SHORT WHILE AROUND THE DEMOCRACY MONUMENT WHERE THEY HAD GONE TO DEMONSTRATE.

2. THE PRINCIPAL TSG DEMAND IS NOW SEVERANCE PAY FOR THE APPROXIMATELY 2,000 GUARDS DISMISSED BY SUPREME COMMAND
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AS A RESULT OF THE STRIKE. THE GUARDS HAVE REQUESTED

SEVERANCE PAY IN AMOUNTS UP TO 15 MONTHS' SALARY FOR GUARDS WITH 10 OR MORE YEARS SERVICE. THIS IS CLEARLY UNACCEPTABLE AND WE HAVE INFORMED SUPREME COMMAND AND THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE THAT WE ARE PREPARED TO PAY SEVERANCE PAY BUT ONLY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THAI LABOR LAW, I.E., A MAXIMUM OF SIX MONTHS' SALARY.

3. ANOTHER TSG DEMAND IS PAYMENT OF 3,000 BAHT TO EACH GUARD BEING TERMINATED. THIS MONEY HAD BEEN RETAINED BY SUPREME COMMAND FOR TSG SALARIES AND WAS INTENDED TO SERVE AS A GUARANTEE AGAINST EQUIPMENT LOSS. SUPREME COMMAND HAS THE MONEY ON HAND AND HAS INDICATED THAT THEY ARE PREPARED TO RETURN IT.

4. OTHER DEMANDS OF THE TSG RELATE TO PER DIEM, MEDICAL BENEFITS, OVERTIME AND THE LIKE. ALL OF THESE ARE DEALT WITH IN THE FEBRUARY 1975 AMENDMENT TO THE SECURITY GUARD CONTRACT. SUPREME COMMAND'S FAILURE TO KEEP THE GUARDS OR THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE FULLY INFORMED OF PROVISIONS OF THIS AMENDMENT SEEM TO ACCOUNT FOR MUCH OF THE CONFUSION AND DIFFICULTY IN RESOLVING THE STRIKE.

5. THERE HAS BEEN A GOOD BIT OF BUCK-PASSING WITHIN THE RTG AS THE TSG HAVE APPEALED TO SUPREME COMMAND, THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, AND THE LABOR DEPARTMENT IN EFFORTS TO GET THE RTG TO MEET THEIR DEMANDS. NONE OF THE THAI AGENCIES INVOLVED APPEARS WILLING TO TAKE A HARD LINE WITH THE GUARDS. REPRESENTATIVES OF EACH AGENCY HAVE APPEALED TO US FOR HELP. SPECIFICALLY, THEY HAVE ASKED US TO PROVIDE FUNDS TO COVER SEVERANCE PAY WHICH THE GUARDS HAVE REQUESTED.

6. ON JULY 31 A SMALL DELEGATION CLAIMING TO REPRESENT THE SECURITY GUARDS SHOWED UP AT THE EMBASSY TO DISCUSS THEIR GRIEVANCES. THEY WERE TOLD THAT THIS MATTER SHOULD BE DISCUSSED WITH THE RTG, NOT THE EMBASSY. THE FOLLOWING DAY, THE BANGKOK POST CARRIED A STORY IN WHICH THE GUARDS LEADER, BANKIT THONGOUAN RELATED A CONVERSATION HE CLAIMED TO HAVE HAD WITH THE DCM. WE HAVE NOTIFIED THE RTG THAT THE DCM DID NOT MEET WITH THE TSG AND THAT NO ELEMENT

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OF THE U.S. MISSION HELD DISCUSSIONS WITH THE GUARDS ON THEIR DEMANDS. WE HAVE ISSUED A PRESS STATEMENT TO THIS EFFECT AS WELL.

7. WE ANTICIPATE THAT NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE TSG AND THE RTG WILL CONTINUE THROUGHOUT THE NEXT WEEK. IN THE MEANTIME, SECURITY AT U.S. TENANTED INSTALLATIONS CONTINUES TO BE PROVIDED BY A COMBINATION OF U.S. SECURITY

PERSONNEL, REGULAR THAI MILITARY AND THOSE TSG WHO RETURNED
TO WORK AFTER THE INITIAL STRIKE PERIOD.
WHITEHOUSE

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